

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

January 29, 2008

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary Chao:

We write today to bring to your attention layoffs of 63 employees of the Department of Energy's (DOE) prime contractor for the Yucca Mountain Project, as well as the likely release of roughly 500 more employees of Project contractors in the coming weeks.

The Yucca Mountain Project employs many scientists, engineers, environmental and safety experts, as well as administrative staff who are highly skilled and have transferable skills. Currently, there are approximately 2400 people employed by either the Department of Energy or one of its contractors to do work on the Yucca Mountain project, and 85 percent of those workers live in the Las Vegas area.

As a delegation we have been working tirelessly to stop the Yucca Mountain project. We believe that the dangers it would expose our residents to and the economic harm it would bring to our state is irrevocable. We are also aware that as we are successful in closing down this ill-conceived project, that there are many valuable workers who will need to transition to other jobs.

As you know, the unemployment rate in the State of Nevada is 5.8 percent, one of the highest in the nation, significantly higher than the national unemployment rate of 5 percent. Nevada has also been hit especially hard by the mortgage foreclosure crisis.

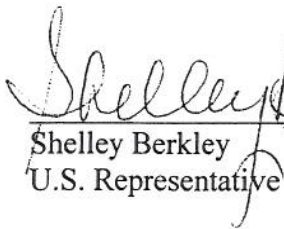
We request that the Department of Labor make the necessary resources available for rapid response to this situation and to ensure that these hardworking individuals receive appropriate assistance for transitioning into new jobs. With layoffs affecting well over 50 workers from multiple companies, the Yucca Mountain Project should also be eligible for National Emergency Grants awarded by the Labor Department to assist affected workers.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this important issue. We look forward to working with you in the future to assure our state has the resources it needs to keep Nevadans employed.

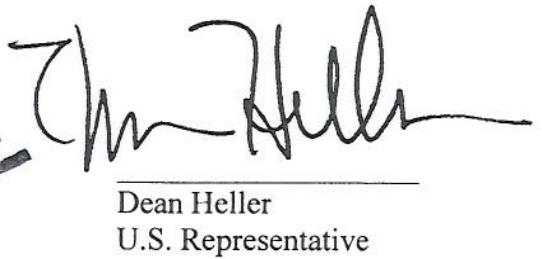
Sincerely,


Harry Reid
U.S. Senator


John Ensign
U.S. Senator


Shelley Berkley
U.S. Representative


Jon Porter
U.S. Representative


Dean Heller
U.S. Representative

cc: Governor Jim Gibbons
AULGs
Office of Legacy Management, Department of Energy
Honorable Samuel W. Bodman, Secretary, DOE
Mr. Edward F. Sproat, Director, OCRWM